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FREDERICK THE GREAT.

THE history of the House of Brandenburg has been one of the most spirit-stirring in modern history. In a short space of time we find a little province figuring as one of the principal powers of Europe. This result was brought about by its princes. They were all energetic and determined men; one of them especially was conspicuous for the possession of these qualities—the one whose portrait we have given, and who, in

statesman as well as a soldier—a man of the pen as well as a man of the sword. He made his country great. Prussia had scarcely an existence till his time. It made great advances in civilisation under him. Though he was a despot and a soldier, Frederick felt that it was the duty of a monarch to make his people as happy as possible; and thus, in spite of arbitrary laws and army flagellations, a certain degree of



the language of his time, was called the GREAT. Now men's judgments are better than they were. War we have learnt to think a fearful ill, and the men who create it we deem guilty of enormous crime. But the world did homage to the warrior generally called Frederick the Great. And in truth the title was not undeserved. He was something more than a soldier. He had sound economical views. He did much to improve his country. He had liberal and tolerant aims. He was a

liberalism made its way into the national heart. His father, notwithstanding his savage temper, had bequeathed to him well-regulated finances and an example of severe attention to business; but he had left the people half-barbarous still, as they had been in ruder ages, oppressed by ignorant government officials—in fact, but little better off than Russian serfs at the present time. The reform Hardenberg introduced in 1818, by which the peasantry of the country became proprietors of the

soil—a change which has been productive of unmixed good—was attempted to be introduced by Frederick. The age, however, was not ripe for it; but the fact shows that he was something better than a fighting monarch,—that he sought to win more permanent laurels—to achieve a more enduring fame.

Frederick was born on the 24th of January, 1712, in the palace at Berlin. His mother was a daughter of our first George. Though his father was German to the backbone, he received a French education. His first governess was a Frenchwoman. He was initiated from earliest infancy into the French language as his mother-tongue. His food and dress were of the simplest kind. He was kept long in petticoats; and as he himself said, in the last years of his life, he “was brought up on beer-gruel.” His constitution was extremely delicate; he was frequently ailing, and his parents, having already lost two infant sons, felt the greater anxiety on his account. The state of his health, no doubt, affected his disposition and manner. In his childhood he was remarkably quiet and dull. On entering his seventh year, Frederick was removed from the tuition of females. His tutors were commanded to make him a Christian, and to pay the strictest attention to his morals. They were commanded not to teach him Latin, but, on the other hand, were to make him master of French, German, and modern history, and, above all, were to excite in him a genuine love for the military profession, and to impress upon him that, as “nothing in the world but the sword can confer honour and glory on a prince, he would be despised by the whole world if he did not love it and seek in it his only glory.” Everything that could be done to make him a soldier was done. The king formed a company of cadets, of which the young prince was commander, who was not exempted from any of the duties of his corps, he having frequently to stand sentry before the palace, with his musket and cartouch-box, like any other private soldier. The king strove in other ways to inspire his son with an interest for the military profession. Thus he had a large room in the palace of Berlin fitted up as an armoury, with all the instruments of war. At fourteen, the prince was a captain; at fifteen, major; at sixteen, lieutenant-colonel; and in these ranks he had to do the same duty as any other officer. Never had poor prince a more wretched time of it. His father's harshness and cruelty almost drove him mad. At one time he started for England, but was recovered and brought back. When he became marriageable, his situation was a little improved; but of course the match was a mere state affair:—he married the Princess Elizabeth, daughter of one of the petty German dukes, so numerous till the French Revolution; and when he became king, he never seems to have gone near her Majesty at all. But more attractions awaited Frederick elsewhere.

In 1734 he served in his first campaign, in connexion with the Austrians against the French, who had seized Lorraine and Bar. The prince gave excellent promise, but he seems not unreluctantly to have returned home to write poetry, and to study Bayle and Voltaire till 1740, when the death of his father summoned the prince to take his place. Frederick began his career well. The courts of justice needed a sweeping reform, and he introduced it. The judges were no longer elevated to their places by purchase—the torture was abolished as inhuman. But in the mean while, war, which he had learnt as a profession, was not forgotten—in a few months he was in Silesia, with an army of 28,000. The first great battle he won was at Mollwitz, where 7,000 Austrians were killed and wounded. At Chotersitz, fought thirteen months after, he was again victorious. When peace was restored, the king found that the war had resulted in adding to his dominion a province comprehending nearly 13,800 square miles, with a million and a half of inhabitants, and yielding a revenue of 3,500,000 dollars. Before entering on his second Silesian war, Frederick found himself still further enriched by the peaceful annexation of East Friedland, in consequence of the extinction of the princes of that line. In 1744, we again find Frederick at war with Austria. The campaign was disastrous; but Frederick was not disheartened. He raised more money, and commenced afresh, and with better success—Silesia was

re-conquered. But Austria burnt with revenge, and was determined to strike off his name from the roll of kings. In the hour of danger, however, Frederick was undismayed, and after sixteen months, the second Silesian war terminated as favourably for him as the first. The years of peace were not wasted by Frederick in idle and useless pleasures. His attention was steadily directed to the encouragement of those pursuits which render a state strong and flourishing—to the improvement of agriculture, manufactures, arts and commerce—and to the creation of a military adequate to any contingency. But the time thus devoted did not last long.

In 1756, Frederick again commenced his Austrian war. The battle of Prague was fought in the following year, as was also that terrible one of Rossbach. But, as years rolled away, Frederick found himself growing weaker. England refused further subsidies, and his forces had dwindled away. Greatly depressed by the ruin of his country, he spoke very little and took his meals alone. The reader need only turn to the poems which he wrote at this period to see how deeply he was impressed with the idea that it was impossible for him to escape the fate which Cæsar's victory at Thapsus brought upon Cato. Frederick, however, persevered and triumphed; but the poison which he carried about with him at the time was found still unpacked after his death. It consisted of five or six pills in a narrow glass tube. But in 1762 peace was made, a peace that left all the parties precisely as they were; yet this second war had cost Frederick 180,000 soldiers, and the allied powers 850,000. This bare statement gives but a faint idea of what war does. Achenholtz, the historian of the war, and an eye-witness of the miseries it inflicted, says: “The sufferings of a great part of Germany were immense. Whole provinces had been laid waste, and even in those that were not, internal commerce and industry were almost annihilated, and this, too, in spite of the large sums which France, England, Russia, and Sweden, had scattered over them through their armies or by means of subsidies. Great part of Pomerania and Brandenburg was converted into a desert. There were provinces in which scarcely any men were to be found, and where the women were therefore obliged to guide the plough. In others women were as scarce as men. At every step appeared extensive tracts of uncultivated land; and the most fertile plains in Germany, on the banks of the Oder and the Wesel, looked like the wilds of the Ohio and Oronoko. An officer affirmed that he passed through seven villages in the Hessian dominions, and met with only a single individual—the pastor of one of them.” Such are the results of war. It is time now that the world should refuse to call the man who brings about such results, great. On the 30th of March, 1763, Frederick returned to his capital, which he had not seen for above six years. Still Frederick was not unwilling again to have recourse to arms. In 1772 Maria Theresa was compelled to consent to the partition of Poland. The share of Prussia, though inferior in extent and population to that of the other two parties, was of immense importance, as it connected the province of East Prussia with the king's German dominions, and, by giving him possession of the mouth of the Vistula, rendered the trade of Poland tributary to him.

In 1779 Frederick again set his army in motion to prevent Bavaria from being swallowed up by Austria. The campaign was short, but it was not in vain.

Frederick died in 1781. With regard to his personal appearance, Dr. Moore, who saw him in his old age, says: “He was below the middle size, well made, and remarkably active. There was spirit and determination in his look. He had fine blue eyes and an agreeable countenance. He had a slight stoop, and his head was a little on one side—as was the case with Alexander the Great, as all children know well. He was fond of snuff, of lively repartees, of music, and of the company of philosophers, though he might have had a better companion than Voltaire. Frederick made Prussia great. He made himself a name. For years all England admired him. Still he would have done better had he been less fond of war, and more of a philosopher. It shows little of wisdom

either in king or people when they go to war. Offensive war is forbidden by all history, experience, and common sense—by the teachings of reason and revelation alike."

Frederick has the reputation of having been an atheist. It is clear he was not that; it is equally clear that he was not a believer in revealed religion, though he was the hero of the Protestant cause, and took up arms in its defence. His companions were men of wit, and the wits of that age were such men as Voltaire. He was fond of literature and music, and was a skilful performer on the flute himself. Dr. Burney, who visited Prussia in 1772, and whose judgment cannot be questioned, says: "His Majesty's embouchure was clear and even, his finger brilliant, and his taste clear and simple. I was much pleased, and even surprised, with the neatness of his execution in the allegros, as well as by his expression and feeling in the adagio: in short, his performance surpassed, in many particulars, anything I had ever heard among *dilettanti*, and even professors. His Majesty played three long and difficult concertos successively, and all with equal perfection." His supper-parties were pleasant enough, though the conversation was often more than humorous and witty; for, bashful as Frederick was in regard to his person, he was very free in his language. In the town of Berlin he was popular enough; the inhabitants ran to the doors and took off their hats. Many walked alongside of him that they might have a better view of the great king. A great number of boys always ran before and behind him. It is related, that one day, when the young troop were too annoying, he lifted his crutch-stick, and, shaking it at them, bade them begone,

which drew forth a peal of laughter, one of the young urchins calling out, "A pretty king, indeed! Why, does he not know that Wednesday is a half-holiday?" Frederick was very economical. A country clergyman once solicited from the king an order that his congregation should supply him with forage for a horse, because he was unable to walk to do duty at a chapel in a distant part of the country. Underneath his petition Frederick wrote: "The Bible does not say, *ride* into all the world, but *go* into all the world, and preach to all nations." His dress bore ample testimony to Frederick's penurious character. One of the writers of his life states, that "all the king's shirts were found, at his death, to be so torn and out of repair, that there was not one fit to be put upon the corpse. As there was not time to get a new one made, his valet brought one of his own which he had never worn, and which had been presented to him by his bride; and in this the deceased monarch was buried." The whole of the royal wardrobe, when sold to a Jew, reached only 400 dollars—no very large sum, we confess; but Frederick was no ordinary monarch, and placed little dependence on his tailor. We may as well add here, that it was not till the hundredth anniversary of Frederick's accession to the throne of Prussia, that the foundation-stone was laid in his own capital for the monument to his memory—an equestrian statue by Rauch. Whatever the world may think of Frederick, Prussia owes him much. When he came to it, it was little better than a province; when he left it, it held the chief rank amongst the European monarchies. In his own time no king wore a kinglier crown, or wielded a more royal power.

RUSSIAN LIFE.

It is a happy day in Russia when, for the first time in the year, the sun looks down on the waters of the Nera, and the floating masses of ice are swept away. Flowers begin to spread their petals in the light, and tender leaves to tremble in the gentle breath of spring, and birds to preen themselves on bud-covered branches, and to tune their voices for a summer song. And more than this, the official life of St. Petersburg breaks up like the ice on the river, and the etiquette of the court is thawed, and grave nobles and officers, and pretty Russian damsels, nobly born, who all the winter long have been hard-frozen into the routine of a state life, begin to disappear from lofty mansions and wide streets, and to relieve their long wintry campaign by the luxury and the freedom of country life. Away they go to look on the fields and the prairies, to feel the delights of unconstraint amid the sweet perfume of the flowers.

They do not go to old baronial mansions, stiff and formal as a baron of the days of Lionheart, nor to elegantly fitted villas, filled with every luxury which art can invent or effeminacy desire. The country-houses of Russia are neither built of brick nor stone—simply of wood, painted with all the colours of the rainbow, but without any other attempt at decoration. They are thoroughly comfortable within, notwithstanding, and afford a very agreeable change to the solemn magnificence of St. Petersburg. A man feels at home in a log-house, and even a Russian noble seems for a time to forget that he is not his own, and that he has nothing that he can call his own, and to be as free and happy as a bee sucking honey from a flower. By the way, these wooden houses are surrounded by some of the pleasantest gardens our readers ever saw. It is remarkable that all people, east, west, north, and south, love flowers. The Russian cultivates his patch of garden-ground most carefully, and noble lords seem there as much at home as Cincinnatus on his farm.

There is one thing very peculiar about these Russian country-houses: they are built in every variety of architecture. Here rises up a wooden dwelling modelled after the Greek; here another, with capitals and porticoes, and cornices and columns, never brought together before by any possible chance; here a dwelling that looks like an old Athenian house, and

here another the very counterpart of a brother in Stamboul. All the spring and summer there is plenty of gaiety going on in these strange dwellings. Now a grand *fête*, now a general holiday, now a village festival, now a saint's-day, now a reception of serfs, now a birthday, now a marriage. The opportunities for rejoicing are not few nor far between, and the Russian lords "at home" are not unmindful of them. Sometimes the nobles flock together to the dwelling of a greater noble than they, who gives some splendid feast in honour of them all. Thus, a little while ago, the Grand Duke Michael, brother of the present emperor, gave a magnificent entertainment to the nobility. Everything which could contribute to the festivity of the occasion was prepared; the forests and gardens and parks presented new wonders and attractions at every turn. All day long the guests were entertained; but the night surpassed the day in the extent and gorgeous character of its amusement. There was an orchestra of immense extent, crowded with performers of first-rate ability; a ball, perhaps the largest and most magnificent on record; and fireworks that were not to be outdone. Wonder after wonder, marvel upon marvel—verily a turning of night into day; showers of fire, fountains of fire, cascades of fire, pyramids of fire; fiery dragons, elves, and goblins; fiery serpents, eagles, and Greek crosses followed in quick succession; fiery bouquets of flowers that split into ten thousand fragments and formed an imperial crown, which crown's appearance was hailed with shouts and the national strain or "God save King Muscovite!"

All the spring, all the summer, feasts and rejoicings such as these delight the Russian nobles; and when from his cold retreat Winter comes forth again, and scatters autumn leaves, and chains up the babbling stream, and silences the birds, and kills the flowers, he puts an end to the festivities, and, along with streams and rivers, freezes the Russian nobility into cold proprieties and the icy etiquette of the imperial court.

The place at which the grand festival occurred, of which we spoke above, was called Paulowsky. A little way to the west of Paulowsky, on the shores of the Gulf of Finland, is the château and imperial park of Peterhoff. No one can forget the beauty of the road which leads to this residence: once